

Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics

The Doctrines of God: The Trinity Part 5

The Heights Church February 7, 2016

The Trinity

3 basic errors about the Person of Christ

1. Deity

1. **Ebionism**: Denies the deity of Christ. Jesus was a normal human empowered by God.
2. **Arianism**: Denies Christ is eternal and hence is not fully divine.

2. Humanity

1. **Apollinarianism**: Denies the full humanity of Christ. The person of Christ had a human body but not a human mind or spirit. Christ's mind and spirit were from the divine nature of the Son of God
2. **Docetism**: Denies the humanity of Christ. Jesus' body was an illusion.

3. Two Natures

1. **Nestorianism**: Denies the two natures exist in one person i.e. Christ is a human person and a divine person.
2. **Eutychianism**: Denies the distinction of the natures. Christ had one nature. The human nature of Christ was taken up and absorbed into the divine nature creating a 3rd New Nature.

The Trinity Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same **perfect in Godhead and also **perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man**, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son,**

The Trinity Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

The Trinity Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451

The council of Chalcedon taught the church how to talk about the two natures of Christ without falling into errors.

- 1. One nature of Christ is sometimes seen doing things in which the other nature does not share.**
- 2. Anything either nature does is done by the person of Christ.**
- 3. In the incarnation Christ gave up the glory of divine life but not the possession of divine powers.**
- 4. In the incarnation Christ gained human attributes without giving up divine attributes.**
- 5. The initiative for the incarnation came from God and not man.**

The Trinity The Filioque Clause Controversy

- *filioque* is a Latin term that means “and from the Son”
- In A.D. 589 a regional church council at Toledo added to the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father **and from the Son**.
 - But when the Helper comes, whom **I will send to you** from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. John 15:26
 - if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, **I will send him to you**. John 16:7
- Officially adopted by the Pope in 1017.

The Trinity Orthodox versus Rome/Evangelicals

- The Filioque Clause was thought to refer to the eternal relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Son before creation, not after the conclusion of Jesus' ministry.
- 1054 Eastern Orthodox split from Rome ostensibly over this change but really over political issues with the Pope.
- To this day Orthodox churches tend to place more emphasis on mystical, Spirit inspired experience over rationally understandable adoration of Christ as Lord.
- Evangelical faith is centered on Christ while the Orthodox are more focused on the Holy Spirit.
- Orthodox worship is more visual than in Evangelical churches. Sermons are part of the liturgy but there is as much emphasis on icons and symbolic movements of the clergy.

Trinitarian Summary:

- 1. There is one and only one true and living God.**
- 2. This one God eternally exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.**
- 3. Each of the three persons are completely equal in attributes and each have the divine nature.**
- 4. Though each person is fully and completely God, the persons are not identical.**
- 5. Jesus Christ is fully and completely divine and fully and completely human.**
- 6. In Jesus Christ the divine and human natures are distinct.**
- 7. The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit.**

The Trinity 1689 London Baptist Confession of faith

In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him.

The Trinity Elder Affirmation of Faith

- **2.1 We believe in one living, sovereign, and all-glorious God, eternally existing in three infinitely excellent and admirable Persons: God the Father, fountain of all being; God the Son, eternally begotten, not made, without beginning, being of one essence with the Father; and God the Holy Spirit, proceeding in the full, divine essence, as a Person, eternally from the Father and the Son. Thus each Person in the Godhead is fully and completely God.**
- **2.2 We believe that God is supremely joyful in the fellowship of the Trinity, each Person beholding and expressing His eternal and unsurpassed delight in the all-satisfying perfections of the triune God.**

The Trinity Heights Church Affirmation of Faith

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three person; that these are equal in every divine perfection, and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.